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Security Council

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Statement by the President of the Security Council

At the 4978th meeting of the Security Council, held on 25 May 2004, in connection with the council's consideration of the item entitled "Letter dated 25 May 2004 from the Permanent Representative of the Sudan to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2004/425)", the President of the Security Council made the following statement on behalf of the Council:

"The Council expresses its grave concern over the deteriorating humanitarian and human rights situation in the Darfur region of Sudan. Noting that thousands have been killed and that hundreds of thousands of people are at risk of dying in the coming months, the Council emphasizes the need for immediate humanitarian access to the vulnerable population.

The Council also expresses its deep concern at the continuing reports of large-scale violations of human rights and of international humanitarian law in Darfur, including indiscriminate attacks on civilians, sexual violence, forced displacement and acts of violence, especially those with an ethnic dimension, and demands that those responsible be held accountable. The Council strongly condemns these acts which jeopardize a peaceful solution to the crisis, stresses that all parties to the N'djamena humanitarian ceasefire agreement committed themselves to refraining from any act of violence or any other abuse against civilian populations, in particular women and children, and that the Government of Sudan also committed itself to neutralizing the armed janjaweed militias, and urges all parties to take necessary steps to put an end to violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. In this regard, the Council takes note of the recommendations of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in his report dated May 7 2004 (E/CM.4/2005/3).

The Council reiterates its call on the parties to ensure the protection of civilians and to facilitate humanitarian access to the affected population. In that regard, the Council emphasizes the need for the Government of Sudan to facilitate the voluntary and safe return of refugees and displaced persons to their homes, and to provide protection for them, and also calls upon all parties, including opposition groups, to support these objectives. The Council calls on all parties, in accordance with the provisions of resolution 1502 (2003), to allow full unimpeded access by humanitarian personnel to all people in need of assistance, and to make available, as far as possible, all necessary facilities for their operations, and to promote the safety, security and freedom of movement of humanitarian personnel and their assets.

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The Council, while welcoming the ceasefire agreement signed April 8 in N'Djamena, Chad, emphasizes the urgent need for all parties to observe the ceasefire and to take immediate measures to end the violence and calls on the Government of Sudan to respect its commitments to ensure that the Janjaweed militias are neutralized and disarmed. Stressing that a ceasefire commission with international representation is a central component of the April 8 agreement, the Council expresses its full and active support for the efforts of the African Union to establish the ceasefire commission and protection units and calls upon the opposition groups and the Government of Sudan to facilitate the immediate deployment of monitors in Darfur, and to ensure their free movement throughout Darfur. The Council also calls upon Member States to provide generous support for the efforts of the African Union.

The Council welcomes the announcement by the Government of Sudan that it will issue visas to all humanitarian workers within 48 hours of application, eliminate the need for travel permits, and facilitate the entrance and clearance of equipment imported for humanitarian purposes. The Council acknowledges the appointment of a Fact Finding Commission by Presidential Decree. The Council, however, is seriously concerned about continued logistical impediments prohibiting a rapid response in the face of a stark and mounting crisis and calls upon the Government to fulfil its announced commitment to cooperate fully and expeditiously with humanitarian efforts to provide assistance to the imperiled populations of Darfur, noting with particular concern that the humanitarian challenge will be aggravated by the imminent onset of the rainy season.

The Council calls upon the international community to respond rapidly and effectively to the consolidated appeal for Darfur.

The Council observes with distress the prolonged absence of an accredited Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator and affirms the need for the immediate appointment and appropriate accreditation of a permanent Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator to ensure daily coordination in order to address impediments to humanitarian access brought to the UN's attention by the international aid community.

The Council encourages the parties to step up their efforts to reach a political settlement to their dispute in the interest of the unity and sovereignty of Sudan.

The Council requests that the Secretary-General keep it informed on the humanitarian and human rights crisis as it unfolds, and, as necessary, to make recommendations."